

TATTOOS AND IDENTITY – MECS1000 MEDIA & CULTURE

Read the article from *The Guardian* (2011) **Thailand wants Buddha tattoo ban for tourists**

Culture minister says tattoos deemed 'fashionable' by visitors seen by many Thais as offensive and disrespectful



Photograph: Christophe Archambault/AFP/Getty Images

Tourists visiting **Thailand** should be barred from getting culturally insensitive Buddhist tattoos, the culture ministry says. Niphit Intharasombat, the culture minister, said residents have complained that tattoo parlours are etching sacred images of Buddha and other religious images on to the skin of non-Buddhist visitors.

"Foreigners see these tattoos as fashion," Niphit said on the ministry's website.

They do not think of respecting **religion**, or they may not be aware that these tattoos can be offensive, he added. Thailand is mostly Buddhist, and Buddha statues and images are considered sacred objects of worship. Niphit said the culture ministry had asked Thai tattoo parlours to halt the activity. According to the official news agency, NNT, he also asked provincial governors to "inspect tattoo studios and seek their co-operation".

NNT also claimed Niphit wants a new law banning the practice.

Reference List

The Guardian (2011) Thailand wants Buddha tattoo ban for tourist. *The Guardian* [Online] available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/02/thailand-ban-tourists-buddha-tattoo> [Accessed 17th November 2014].

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Should some tattoos be banned if they offend people?**

Are there differences with regards to tattoos (both responses towards them, and by those getting tattoo work done) in relation to (Consider each of these in turn):-

- **gender**
- **Age**
- **Race**
- **Class**
- **Sexualities**
- **Disabilities**
- **geographical locations**
- **Cultures**

Watch the clip from the documentary 2,000 Tattoos, 40 Piercings and a Pickled Ear

<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/clip/108119> (Clip 1 10.40 mins)

Associated questions:

1. What is the difference between someone who has tattoos and a body modifier (as the people in the documentary are described)?
2. Is there a difference response to the female in this clip? Why/Why not?
3. Why do you think there might be stereotypes/prejudices with regards to tattoos?

Understanding Semiotics:

- <https://youtu.be/uo7V48EOqwU> (Recapping on semiotics 1.10 mins)
- [How to analyse a print advertisement](#) (2.12 mins)
- [Semiotics in *The Big Bang Theory*](#) (3.31 mins)